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Abstract

Randomized control designs have been used in the public health and psychological literatures to examine the relationship between victim outreach following intimate partner abuse (IPA) and various outcomes. These studies have largely relied on samples drawn from health providers and shelters to examine outcomes outside the criminal legal system. Based on the positive findings from this body of research, we expected that a victim-focused, community-coordinated outreach intervention would improve criminal legal system outcomes. The current study used a randomized, longitudinal design to recruit 236 ethnically diverse women with police-reported IPA to compare treatment-as-usual with an innovative community-coordinated, victim-focused outreach program. Findings indicated that the outreach program was effective in increasing women's engagement with prosecution tasks as well as likelihood of taking part in prosecution of their abusers. Results were particularly robust among women marginalized by ethnicity and class, and those still living with their abusers after the target incident.

Keywords

coordinated community response, intimate partner violence, outreach, victim cooperation

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Impact of Victim-Focused Outreach

Goodman and Epstein (2005) document how policies to address intimate partner abuse (IPA) have ignored victims' needs and voices.¹ For example, a number of IPA interventions address what is typically referred to as coordinated community responses (CCRs) to domestic violence. In general, a CCR involves collaboration between various community partners to locally coordinate IPA intervention and prevention efforts (Klevens, Baker, Shelley, & Ingram, 2008). It is not always clear, however, to what degree individual CCRs are *victim-focused*. Indeed, many CCR evaluations focus on abuser interventions (e.g., Bledsoe, Sar, & Barbee, 2006; Muftić & Bouffard, 2007; Salazar, Emshoff, Baker, & Crowley, 2007). Certainly abusers' decreased recidivism and increased accountability are significant for victims' well-being (assuming these interventions actually accomplish either or both of these goals); however, as Goodman and Epstein (2005) have so ably described, policy interventions and research evaluations appear to emphasize outcomes focused on abusers more often than outcomes focused on victims. Disturbingly, Salazar and her colleagues (2007) found that although the implementation of a CCR increased male abusers' arrests, probation, and forced intervention, the CCR implementation also resulted in more women being arrested for IPA. Although CCRs seem necessary to most effectively respond to IPA, care must be taken in both practice and research not to prioritize responses to abusers over responses to victims. Thus, CCRs must include at least some responses that are *victim-focused* (Adler, 2002; Goodman & Epstein, 2005; Jordan, 2004).

In a classic 1983 article, Maureen McLeod documented a long history of police officers', prosecutors', and judges' *reluctance* to proceed with official action against intimate partner abusers, even when the victims requested such formal responses. This was published when police departments across the United States and other countries were just beginning to implement mandatory domestic violence arrest policies and train officers about the dynamics of domestic violence. At the same time, battered women's shelters and other feminist advocacy programs were being implemented for abused women. Notably, McLeod not only discussed the reluctance of criminal legal system² officials to formally address IPA, but she also emphasized the potential of IPA *victims'* reluctance with criminal legal system officials:

Victim noncooperation can be operationalized in several manners—failure to call the police, failure to cooperate at the time of the police intervention, failure to sign the formal complaint, failure to appear at the district attorney's office to formally document the charges, and failure to appear at the scheduled court hearing. (1983, p. 400)

Historically (and to some extent currently) abused women have been characterized in derogatory terms when they do not engage in the process of the criminal legal system—portrayals that fail to appreciate the serious psychosocial, including sometimes lethal, consequences of abuse by an intimate partner. These portrayals also fail to take into account the fact that the goals of the criminal legal system are not always aligned with victim/survivor goals (Smith, 2000).

To better understand IPA victims' decision-making, feminist scholars and practitioners are increasingly framing abused women's choices as "rational" given the context of their lives, including when they chose to stay with their abusers or are reluctant to work with the prosecution in cases against their abusers (Davies, Lyon, & Monti-Catania, 1998; Goodman & Epstein, 2005; Hoyle & Sanders, 2000; Kingsnorth & MacIntosh, 2004). In addition, they stress that abused women's experiences vary significantly depending on a multitude of characteristics about them, their abusers, the abuse, and their access to support. Finally, IPA victims' decision-making surrounding official actions can be thwarted by the number and complexity of systems involved (e.g., law enforcement, attorneys, victim advocates) (Adler, 2002). Therefore, victim-focused CCRs provide one route to potentially addressing women's individual needs given the context of their lives following police-reported IPA. For example, an IPA victim may more often decide to work with the criminal legal system if she is contacted by community-based advocates (who can ensure confidentiality to a degree that system-based advocates cannot) for services that address her specific needs given the context of her life.

A Brief Review of Research on Victim Outreach

To date, most of the research on IPA victim-focused outreach (or intervention): (a) has been conducted by researchers from the fields of psychology and public health; (b) uses samples drawn from battered women's shelters or emergency rooms (or other medical clinics); (c) uses randomized control designs; (d) does not involve a CCR as much as a smaller group knowing who in the community could be referrals (more than these referral agencies and service providers across the community working actively in the outreach program); and (e) focuses on the impact of outreach advocacy on the victims' revictimization, quality of life, depression, and social support (see Ramsay et al., 2009). This area of research has documented numerous positive outcomes from victim-focused outreach. Such studies conducted in shelters found that women with IPA victim-focused outreach reported less revictimization by their abusers (Bybee & Sullivan, 2002; Sullivan & Bybee, 1999; Tiwari et al., 2005), a better quality of life (Bybee & Sullivan, 2002, 2005; Sullivan & Bybee, 1999; Sullivan, Bybee, & Allen, 2002; Sullivan & Rumptz, 1994; Sullivan, Rumptz, Campbell, Eby, & Davidson, 1996; Sullivan, Tan, Basta, Rumptz, & Davidson, 1992), fewer psychological distress/mental health symptoms (Constantino, Kim, & Crane, 2005; Tiwari et al., 2005), more social support (Bybee & Sullivan, 2002, 2005; Constantino et al., 2005; Sullivan & Bybee, 1999; Sullivan & Rumptz, 1994; Sullivan et al., 1992), more effectiveness in accessing resources (Constantino et al., 2005; Sullivan & Bybee, 1999; Sullivan & Davidson, 1991; Sullivan et al., 1992), more effective in reaching their goals (Sullivan & Rumptz, 1994); and better physical and emotional functioning (Tiwari et al., 2005) than women without such advocacy outreach.

IPA victim-focused outreach programs are commonly implemented in medical facilities (such as emergency rooms and clinics) and are typically evaluated with randomized control designs. For example, studies have indicated that victim advocacy outreach resulted in victims' better cooperation with medical personnel (Krasnoff & Moscati, 2002), a greater likelihood of follow-up with a community-based victim advocate agency (Krasnoff & Moscati,

2002), feeling safer (Kendall et al., 2009), and engaging in more safety-promoting behaviors (Gillum, Sun & Woods, 2009; McFarlane et al., 2002, 2004). In a study of pregnant IPA victims in a health facility, the victim advocacy outreach did not have an impact on whether women used the police or health care providers; however, more severely victimized women were more likely to use the police (McFarlane, Soeken, Reel, Parker, & Silva, 1997). Moreover, the authors concluded that there was a “system failure” in responding to help-seeking victims of IPA. In another study of abused women identified in a health facility, whether the women received a wallet-sized referral card or a 20-min nurse outreach protocol did not differentiate the women’s subsequent reports of revictimization (McFarlane, Groff, O’Brien, & Watson, 2006).

In sum, randomized control designs have been used in the public health and psychological literatures to examine the relationship between victim outreach and various IPA outcomes using samples of women drawn from health providers and shelters. Taken together, these studies indicate significant potential for outreach to IPA victims on outcomes that are relevant to the criminal legal system (e.g., engaging with formal support, such as medical professionals; calling the police), though outreach evaluation studies have not yet examined criminal legal system outcomes. Therefore, we reasoned that a carefully designed and implemented system-wide (that is, beyond intervening with women at shelters and health clinics) CCR that prioritizes victim needs could have an impact on criminal legal system outcomes. The current study, therefore, fills voids in the extant research by using a longitudinal experimental design with a sample of police-reported IPA cases to evaluate the impact of a truly community-coordinated *and* victim-centered outreach approach on criminal legal outcomes.

The Current Study

The current study evaluated the impact on criminal legal system outcomes of a victim-focused CCR where the relevant criminal legal system and community-based agencies were stakeholders in the outreach design and implementation. In 2005, the Colorado Department of Public Safety received funding from the Office on Violence against Women (OVW) to initiate the Domestic Violence Coordinated Triage Intervention Project (Triage Project), a CCR that involves collaboration across criminal legal system and community-based stakeholders in Denver (CO). The goal of the current study, then, was to conduct a randomized, longitudinal study of this community-coordinated, victim-focused outreach program for IPA (see also DePrince, Labus, Belknap, Buckingham, & Gover, 2012).

Prior to the inception of the Triage Project, police-reported victims of IPA received referrals to community-based agencies from a *system*-based advocate located in either the Victim Assistance Unit (VAU) of the Denver Police Department (DPD), City Attorney’s Office, or District Attorney’s Office. Referrals, although potentially useful for connecting women with resources, place the burden on women to initiate contact with relevant community-based agencies. The primary goal of the Triage Project was to implement a victim-focused CCR intervention, which is hence referred to as the Outreach Program and signified by “O.” Distinct from the referrals provided by system-based advocates to victims, O involved community-based advocates initiating outreach by phone to IPA victims at case

inception (regardless of prosecution filing status). Community-based advocates, unlike system-based advocates, can offer women access to *confidential* support and services. Consistent with expectations that victim-focused, community-coordinated outreach programs be flexible and individualized (e.g., Davies et al., 1998; Goodman & Epstein, 2005), the community-based agency designated to make outreach was chosen based on both the needs reported by victims (usually to system-based advocates in the police department or prosecuting attorney offices) and the Review Team's assessment of the most pressing needs in the case (e.g., legal advocacy versus support).

At the start of this research, less than half of the cases reviewed by the Triage Team received O due to limited staffing capacity of community-based agencies. The remaining cases received treatment-as-usual under the old system: referrals offered during phone contact with system-based advocates, which is hence signified by "R." For the purposes of this experimental design, a team leader on the Triage Team used an algorithm to randomly assign women to the O or R condition during the study period, thus allowing us to compare the coordinated outreach intervention to the treatment-as-usual (referral) condition. Participants were interviewed at three points in time: initial interview following police-reported IPA (Time 1; T1), and 6 (Time 2; T2) and 12 months (Time 3; T3) later.³

Method

Participants

Participants ($N = 236$) were recruited from the population of publicly accessible, nonsexual assault IPA incident reports referred to the Triage Team in Denver (CO) between December 5 2007 and July 14 2008 that involved a heterosexual couple, adult victim and offender, and no cross-arrest. Of the 1,416 police reports accessed through public records during the study period, 76 women were excluded from recruitment because the Triage Team determined (prior to randomization) that the case involved grave risk for the victim (e.g., a pregnant victim for whom the incident involved a weapon). Fifty-seven victims were excluded for a mix of reasons (e.g., presence of a cross-arrest, same-sex partner, monolingual Spanish speaker, administrative error). Additional case exclusions involved victims who could not be reached for recruitment due to incorrect or no contact information (e.g., due to transient living status). Thus, of the original 1,416 reports, we were able to attempt recruitment of 827 women. Of the 827 women who we attempted to recruit: 9% declined to participate when reached by phone; 8% told us they would call back if interested, but did not; and 15% scheduled a first session, but cancelled/no-showed and were not successfully rescheduled. We never reached 39% of women by phone. Ultimately, 29% of women attended the first interview session.

Of the 239 women who attended a first interview session, 236 were enrolled in this study. Demographic data for those 236 women reflect the recruitment of a diverse sample. Specifically, women's ages ranged from 18 to 63, with an average age of 33.4 ($SD = 11.0$). Women reported their ethnic backgrounds to be 47% White/Caucasian, 30% Black or African American, 2% Asian/Asian American, 1% Pacific Islander, 11% American Indian or Alaskan Native, 6% other, and 39% Hispanic or Latina. Almost half the sample reported having ever been married (49%). Women described their current relationship status to be:

9% married, 8% living with someone, 18% divorced, 12% separated, 2% widowed, 40% single and never married, and 7% other.

Women reported the following in terms of highest level of education: 3% 1st-8th grade; 27% some high school; 26% high school; 25% some college; 8% Associate's degrees; 7% 4-year college degree; 2% postgraduate education; and 1% other (e.g., trade school). Women's median income (including salary and nonsalary sources) was US\$7,644 (range = 0-US\$108,000) and average occupational prestige (coded based on Hollingshead, 1975) was 31.91 ($SD = 21.59$). To capture SES in a single global score (rather than including correlated variables separately in analyses), a principal component analysis (PCA) using orthogonal rotation was applied to education, occupation, and income variables. The income variable was affected by 4 outlying data points, which were replaced with the value of 3 SD above the mean (Dixon, 1960) prior to the PCA. A single component solution emerged (all component loadings above .75); we saved the factor score for each individual for use in analyses.

The Denver Police Department (DPD) does not collect demographic information in a way that allowed us to evaluate the representativeness of our sample relative to the population of IPA incidents reported. Therefore, we used spatial data to explore issues of sample representation. Figure 1 illustrates the geocoded addresses where study participants reported living (in black) relative to the addresses of all IPA incidents reported across the city/county during the recruitment period (in white). Participant addresses in Denver were geocoded by matching addresses with the geocoded addresses of all Denver addresses available at www.denver.gov. Geocoded data on reported incidents of IPA were provided to the research team by the DPD. The North American Datum 1983, State Plane Colorado Central, Feet coordinate system was used. As seen in Figure 1, participants recruited into the study appear to be representative of the spatial locations of IPA incident reports. Because these spatial locations provide a source of information on demographic characteristics of neighborhoods (e.g., income, socioeconomic status, ethnic composition), our sample appears to be drawn from diverse spatial locations that reflect the distribution of reported IPA incidents, suggesting that we were able to recruit a sample that is representative of incidents of IPA reported more generally.

Measures

Contextual variables. In addition to asking women to report on demographic variables (see participants), we asked women to report on the following contextual variables at T1: whether they had children (yes, no); and whether they were living with the target offender when the incident occurred (yes, no) and at the time of the T1 interview (yes, no). In addition, we assessed economic dependence by asking women to respond to the question, "At the time of the incident, how important to your financial stability was the money he brings home?" on a scale of 1 (not at all important) to 5 (absolutely necessary). At T3, we added a question to assess women's perceptions of physical dependence on the abuser because of anecdotal reports about the importance of this physical dependence at T1/T2. Specifically, we asked women to rate "how dependent on Mr. _____ were you for your physical well-being?" at the time of the incident on a scale of 1 (not at all dependent) to 5 (entirely dependent).

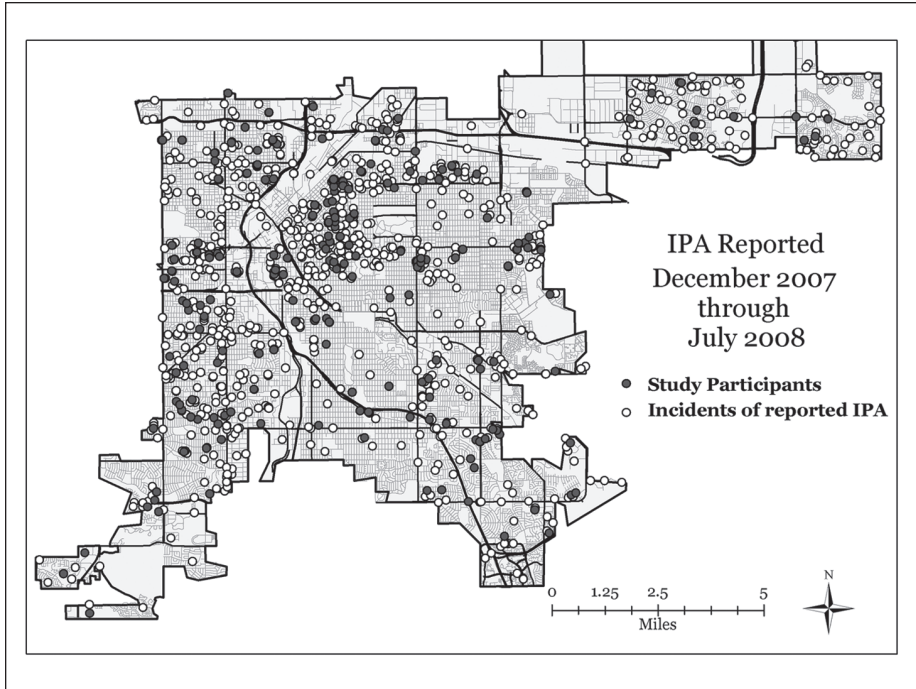


Figure 1. Participants' residences relative to location of overall IPA reports during the recruitment period

Severity of target incident abuse. The severity of the target IPA incident that resulted in a police report and inclusion in the study was assessed using the modified Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS; Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996), which was administered by interview. We also collected women's reports of baseline aggression by the same offender in the six months prior to the target incident. From the CTS, we tallied the total number of psychologically (possible range: 0-15) and physically (possible range: 0-13) aggressive tactics used by the abuser in the target incident as well as the number of injuries sustained by the victim (possible range: 0-17).

Case disposition. We collected case disposition data from publicly accessible sources, coding data in several ways. First, we coded disposition status as categories, including: no charges filed; refused charges; dismissed; all charges not guilty; and at least one guilty charge. Second, we calculated the total number of charges for which the abuser was found guilty. Finally, we coded the severity of the case disposition as follows: 1 = *not guilty on any charge*; 2 = *most serious guilty verdict involved a municipal case*; 3 = *most serious guilty verdict was misdemeanor*; and 4 = *most serious guilty verdict was felony*.

Engagement with prosecution tasks. At T3, we asked women to consider what they were asked to do since the incident to help with prosecution. To prompt their memory, we presented them with a list of common tasks that they might have been asked to do over the

year, such as: return phone calls; give information about witnesses or the incident; come to a meeting; respond to a subpoena; go to court; testify at court; provide updated contact information. After reviewing this list, women indicated which category best described their engagement: I did everything the prosecuting attorney's office asked; I have done some but not all of the things the prosecuting attorney's office asked me to do; I have not done anything the prosecuting attorney asked.

Court attendance. At each time point we asked women (a) if they had been asked to go to court, and (b) whether they went to court if asked. We combined responses across interviews to categorize women in terms of whether they were asked to go to court at any point during the study period (yes, no); and if they were asked, whether they went to court at any point during the study period (yes, no).

Randomized Assignment and Outreach/Referrals Procedures

Prior to Review Team meetings, a system-based advocate (from either the DPD Victim Assistance Unit or City/District Attorney's Office) attempted initial contact with the victim to assess needs. independent of the advocate contact, a team leader applied an algorithm to randomly assign victims to O or R conditions. The assignment was not revealed to anyone else on the Review Team until after the team's risk assessment (to assure that risk was not evaluated differently depending on whether the woman was assigned to O or R conditions). At the Review Team meeting, the team evaluated women's risk in each case. If the Review Team believed that the victim was at grave risk (guided by research on risk factors), she was determined to be ineligible for the study and automatically referred for outreach. Following the risk assessment, the condition was revealed to the Review Team. Among women selected to receive outreach (O), the Review Team then chose a lead outreach agency based on the concerns expressed by the victim (usually to the system-based advocate) and/or the concerns of the interdisciplinary team. The lead community-based agencies began attempts to contact women for outreach after the Review Team meeting. For women assigned to the R condition, the system-based victim advocate followed-up with a return call to offer referrals.

Research Procedures

The Research Team retrieved publicly accessible police incident reports approximately 2-3 times/week, sending eligible women a lead letter inviting them to participate in a Women's Health Study. Approximately three days after the lead letter was sent, researchers began calling potential participants. During the phone contact with the researchers, potential participants were invited to attend a 3-hr session to fill out questionnaires and answer interview questions about women's health. Women who indicated that they would have to take public transportation to the interview were offered cabs rides to and from the interview. Childcare was provided as needed.

At each interview, participants were greeted by the first author or a female graduate-level interviewer, who reviewed consent information, carried out interviews, and administered questionnaires. At the end of each interview, women were compensated for their time and debriefed as to the purposes of that interview. The T1 interview took 2-3 hr; T2 and T3

interviews took 1.5-2 hr. Women received a newsletter that provided referrals to community agencies dealing with health and violence issues. Finally, women received US\$50 for the T1 interview, US\$55 for the T2 interview, and US\$60 for the T3 interview.

Results

Equivalence of Groups

Although we originally conceived of our study design in terms of two conditions: outreach (O) and referral (R), we discovered that some women declined any assistance (D) or were not reached (NR) by the system-based advocate after three separate attempts. Because reports for all women were forwarded to the research team, we recruited women across the four groups: O ($n = 79$), R ($n = 50$), D ($n = 53$), and NR ($n = 54$). The analyses that follow describe comparisons between the two originally designed groups (O, R) as well as exploratory analyses of the two other groups that emerged following initial contact attempts from system-based advocates (D, NR). Using all four groups allowed us to examine differences between the groups related to early engagement with victims (O and R) versus none (D and NR) in a jurisdiction with highly collaborative and integrated outreach services. However, it is important to note that the D and NR conditions were not randomly assigned; therefore, they cannot be interpreted as control groups for the O and R conditions, which were assigned randomly.

In terms of demographic variables, the groups did not differ across the variables representing race/ethnicity, age, education, income, or occupation, nor did they differ in their descriptions of their relationships (i.e., current or former, boyfriend or husband) with their abusers or whether they were living with their abusers at the time of the target incident. However, women *did* differ by group as to whether they were living with the abuser at the T1 interview ($\chi^2(3) = 20.57, p < .001$) approximately one month after the target incident. Women reported living with the abuser at T1 at the following rates: 9% of women in the O group, 18% of women in the R group, 36% of women in the D group, and 8% of women in the NR group. Women in the D group were significantly more likely to live with the abuser than women in the other three groups combined ($\chi^2(1) = 17.98, p < .001$). Importantly, groups (O, R, D, NR) did not differ in terms of the number of psychological and physically aggressive tactics or injuries reported for the target incident or 6 months prior by the same offender (see Table 1). Nor did the groups differ based on perceptions of either economic ($M = 2.40; SD = 1.61$) or physical dependence on the abuser ($M = 1.42; SD = .93$).

Participant Retention

Notably, 84% of women from the original sample (T1, $N = 236$) were retained at either T2 or T3. Specifically, T2 data collection had a retention rate of 81% ($N = 192$), and T3 data collection had a retention rate of 80% ($N = 189$) of the original sample. Of paramount importance, condition (O, R, D, and NR) was unrelated to retention at either T2 or T3. Retention was also unrelated to the case disposition in terms of guilty verdicts (we were able to access disposition information from public records for participants regardless of whether they came to the T2/T3 interviews). In terms of whether charges were filed,

Table 1. Number of Different Aggressive Tactics and Injuries Reported by Group for the Target Incident and the 6 Months Prior

			N	Mean	SD	Range	
Psychological aggression	6 months prior tally	O	77	5.61	3.77	0-	13
		R	48	6.38	3.53	0-	15
		D	52	4.85	3.58	0-	12
		NR	53	5.42	4.05	0-	14
	Target incident tally	O	77	4.27	2.66	0-	11
		R	48	4.58	2.66	0-	14
		D	52	4.08	2.49	0-	9
		NR	53	5.13	2.97	0-	12
Physical aggression	6 months prior tally	O	77	2.82	3.31	0-	11
		R	48	3.15	2.92	0-	10
		D	52	2.56	3.03	0-	11
		NR	53	3.17	3.52	0-	11
	Target incident tally	O	77	2.69	2.51	0-	9
		R	48	3.25	2.86	0-	11
		D	52	3.04	2.77	0-	11
		NR	53	2.85	2.63	0-	11
Injuries	6 months prior tally	O	77	1.97	2.60	0-	8
		R	48	2.25	2.60	0-	8
		D	52	1.87	2.60	0-	12
		NR	53	2.77	3.14	0-	11
	Target incident tally	O	77	3.31	3.26	0-	13
		R	48	3.71	3.68	0-	14
		D	52	2.98	2.95	0-	10
		NR	53	3.70	3.38	0-	13

Note: O = assigned to outreach. R = assigned to referral. D = declined outreach or referral. NR = not reached by system-based advocate. Tally is the number of different types of aggressive tactics or injuries reported.

refused, dismissed, all charges determined “not guilty,” and at least one charge was “guilty,” there were no differences in retention rates, except that women whose cases were never filed were more likely not to be retained at T2, T3, and T2/3. However, this affected a small number of women. Only 8 women had cases not filed; but 75% of these women were not retained at T2. When we excluded these 8 women, there was no relationship between retention status and case disposition categorical outcomes.

Demographic and contextual variables (such as age, having children, and ethnic/minority group) were unrelated to retention rates, with the exception of SES and living with the offender. Lower SES was associated with decreased retention rates at T3 ($t(228) = -2.45$, $p = .01$). Living with the offender at T1 was associated with decreased retention at T2

($\chi^2(1) = 6.38, p = .01$), but not T3. Of women living with the offender at T1, 33% did not return for T2 compared with 16% of women not living with the offender; 41% did not return for T2/T3 compared with 23% of women not living with the offender. A trend suggested that living with the offender at the time of the incident was associated with decreased retention at T3 ($\chi^2(1) = 3.57, p = .06$). Of women living with the abuser at the time of the incident, 25% did not return for T3 compared with 15% of women not living with the abuser at the time of the incident.

Effects of Group (O, R, D, NR) and Moderators

As reported below, we first examined the relationship between Group (O, R, D, NR) and primary outcome variables (engagement with prosecution tasks, court attendance, case disposition). Next, we examined several key variables for their influence (moderating effects) on the primary outcomes as well as their potential moderating effects on Group effects in this longitudinal data set using a mixed effects model in SAS (Holroyd, Labus, & Carlson, 2009; Wolchik et al., 2000). Instead of a repeated measures model, we specified subject as a random effect because this designation produced the best fitting error-covariance structure based on model fit indices (AIC, BIC). All results are organized by the primary outcome variable. Candidate moderators included SES (measured by the SES Factor Score described above), having children at T1, living with the abuser (at incident, T1), perceptions of dependence on the abuser (physical, economic), and identifying with an ethnic minority group.

Women's engagement with prosecution tasks. At T3, women indicated which of three categories best described their engagement with prosecution tasks since the incident (see Table 2). Multinomial regression was applied to test the effect of Group on the categorical engagement rating. Results indicated a significant effect of Group (O, R, NR, D) on women's reports of engagement ($\chi^2(6) = 18.8, p = .005$). Specifically, the odds of total engagement to no engagement were 6 times greater for R compared with NR (odds ratio 6:1, beta (B) = 1.78; Wald Statistic (W) = 7.4, $p = .006$). For O compared with NR, the odds of total engagement to no engagement was also 6:1 ($B = 1.78, W = 5.94, p = .04$). For R compared

Table 2. Women's Reports of Engagement With Prosecution Tasks at Time 3 ($N = 147$).

% of women in each group:	"I did everything the prosecuting attorney office has asked"	"I have done some, but not all of the things the prosecuting attorney asked me to do"	"No, I have not done anything the prosecuting attorney asked"
O	71%	22%	7%
R	63%	30%	7%
D	68%	9%	24%
NR	57%	7%	36%

Note: O = assigned to outreach. R = assigned to referral. D = declined outreach or referral. NR = not reached by system-based advocate.

with D, the odds of total engagement compared with no engagement was 3.4:1; however, this comparison was only significant at $p = .07$ ($B = 1.22$, $W = 3.36$). Similar results were observed when examining the odds of partial engagement to no engagement. For R compared with NR, the odds of partial engagement compared with no engagement were 15:1 ($B = 2.71$, $W = 7.86$, $p = .005$). For D compared with NR, the odds of partial engagement to no engagement were 22.5:1 ($B = 3.11$, $W = 8.00$, $p = .005$). For R compared with D, the odds of partial engagement compared with no engagement were 8:1 ($B = 2.08$, $W = 5.5$, $p = .02$). Finally, the odds of partial engagement to no engagement was 12 times greater for O compared with D, ($OR = 12:1$, $B = 2.48$, $W = 5.77$, $p = .02$).

The degree to which a woman perceived herself to be dependent on the abuser for her physical well-being did not moderate Group effects on engagement. However, across groups, increasing perceptions of physical dependence on the abuser reduced the odds of total to no engagement ($B = -.62$, $W = 7.66$, $p = .006$). SES (measured by the SES Factor Score) was associated with engagement across groups, but did not moderate the Group effect. Specifically, SES was positively associated with engagement: as SES increased, so did the odds of total to no engagement ($B = 1.07$, $W = 7.49$, $p = .006$, $OR = 2.92$) and partial to no engagement ($B = 1.14$, $W = 6.90$, $p = .009$, $OR = 3.13$). No significant effects on engagement were observed for other potential moderators tested, including women's perception of her economic dependence on the abuser; belonging to an ethnic minority group; living with abuser at the time of the incident; or having children.

Victim participation in official action: Going to court. We examined whether or not women reported being asked to go to court at T1, T2, or T3. Of the 233 women in the sample, 135 women reported that they had been asked to go to court at some point during the study period. Within groups, 68% of the O group, 66% of the R group, 51% of the D group, and 43% of the NR group reported that they were asked to go to court. Group membership (O, R, D, NR) was significantly related to whether or not women were asked to go to court ($\chi^2(3) = 11.04$, $p = .01$). Follow-up analysis on the omnibus chi-square test indicated that women in O versus NR groups differed statistically on odds of being asked to go to court ($\chi^2(1) = 3.90$, $p = .048$). Specifically, the NR group was twice as likely to *not* be asked to go to court compared with being asked (*Risk estimate* = 2.00), whereas women in the O group were more likely to be asked than not asked (*Risk estimate* = 1.42). We also noted that 67% of women in O and R conditions combined were asked to go to court whereas only 47% of women in the D and NR conditions combined were asked. We conducted a follow-up analysis comparing women in the O and R groups combined to women in the D and NR groups combined. Women in the O and R groups combined differed significantly from women in the D and NR groups combined ($\chi^2(1) = 10.21$, $p = .001$).

Of the 135 women asked to go to court at some point during the study, 91 reported that they went whereas 40 women reported that they did not go (4 women were excluded from these analyses because they reported an intention to go to court, but did not have to go in the end for reasons such as a plea being entered). Within groups, 77% of the O group, 62% of the R group, 74% of the D group, and 55% of the NR group reported that they went to court. Though no overall group differences were detected in the likelihood women went to court by Group ($\chi^2(3) = 4.88$, $p = .18$), an analysis comparing O and R groups directly pointed to an important trend: women in the O group were more likely to go to court than women in the R group ($\chi^2(1) = 1.27$, $p = .14$; *Risk estimate* = 2.09; Cohen's $d = .20$).

We conducted follow-up analyses to examine O versus R conditions among subgroups of interest. For example, looking only at women who were asked to go to court who identified with an ethnic minority group ($n = 62$), data revealed a significant effect of outreach relative to referral ($\chi^2(1) = 10.21, p = .001$; *Risk estimate* = 3.2, Cohen's $d = .50$). In particular, 78% of ethnic minority women assigned to the O condition went to court whereas only 53% of ethnic minority women assigned to the R condition went to court.

Case disposition. As noted in the Methods section, we examined case disposition in several ways. First, we presented case disposition variables that were coded continuously. We calculated the total number of charges for which the abuser was found guilty by group: O ($M = .58$; $SD = .52$), R ($M = .58$; $SD = .57$); D ($M = .53$; $SD = .54$); NR ($M = .65$; $SD = .52$). The groups did not differ on number of guilty counts ($F(3, 232) = .45, p = .72$). In addition, we coded the severity of the case disposition on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 = *not guilty on any charge*; 2 = *most serious guilty verdict was city ticket*; 3 = *most serious guilty verdict was misdemeanor*; and 4 = *most serious guilty verdict was felony*. The means by group were: O ($M = .89$; $SD = .91$), R ($M = .84$; $SD = .91$); D ($M = .66$; $SD = .73$); NR ($M = .80$; $SD = .71$). The groups did not differ on the severity of case disposition ($F(3, 232) = .82, p = .48$).

Next, we coded case disposition status categorically as follows: no charges filed ($n = 8$); refused charges ($n = 10$); all charges dismissed ($n = 71$), all charges not guilty ($n = 5$); and at least one charge guilty ($n = 133$). Table 3 describes disposition status by Group. At the time of analysis, 5 cases were missing disposition information (e.g., because a case was sealed) and 4 cases were still open. Because very few women fell into the “refused charges” or “not guilty all charges” categories, we recoded the 5-category disposition status variable into a 3-category variable to reflect amount of prosecutorial effort required (Campbell, 2009). In particular, no charges filed or refused charges were coded as 1 (no/refused charges); dismissed as 2 (dismissed); and not guilty/guilty at least one charge as 3 (verdict entered).

Using this 3-category approach, we detected no overall differences by Group ($\chi^2(6) = 3.48, p = .75$). However, the odds of dismissal versus verdict entered were decreased for women who identified as a member of an ethnic minority ($B = -.36, W = 4.76, p = .029$). In addition, SES (as measured by the SES Factor Score) was negatively associated with the 3-category case disposition variable, such that the greater SES Factor Score, the lower the odds of no/refused charges relative to verdict entered ($B = -.61, W = 2.54, OR = .54$). Also,

Table 3. Percentage of Cases in Each Disposition Category as a Function of Group ($N = 227$).

% of women in each group:	No charges filed	Refused charges	Dismissed	Not guilty all charges	At least one charge guilty
O	5	1	33	3	58
R	6	4	29	6	55
D	0	13	31	0	56
NR	2	2	31	0	65

Note: O = assigned to outreach. R = assigned to referral. D = declined outreach or referral. NR = not reached by system-based advocate.

the higher the SES Factor Score, the greater the odds of dismissal compared with verdict entered ($B = .28$, $W = 3.39$, $p = .066$, $OR = 1.3$). A trend across groups suggested that the odds of a dismissal versus verdict entered were negatively associated with living with perpetrator at the time of the incident. In fact, living together at the time of the incident reduced the odds of cases being dismissed relative to having verdicts entered ($B = -.52$, $W = 2.91$, $p = .088$, $OR = .60$).

Following up on the finding that living with the abuser at the time of the incident was marginally related to the 3-category disposition status variable, we looked closely at women who were living with the abuser at T1. Recall that T1 interviews took place a median of 26 days after the incident. Continuing to live with the abuser may make participating in the criminal legal system process particularly difficult. Of particular note, 100% of women who lived with the abuser and received outreach (O) had at least one guilty verdict entered against the abuser. In the R group, 33% of women's cases had a verdict entered, 56% were dismissed, and 11% had no charges/were refused. In the D group, 24% of women's cases had a verdict entered, 18% were dismissed, and 59% had no charges/were refused. In the NR group, 50% of women's cases had a verdict entered and 50% were dismissed. Following up on an omnibus chi-square test comparing women who lived with the abuser at T1 across all four groups on case disposition status ($\chi^2(6) = 11.75$, $p = .068$), a direct comparison of women in the O and R groups revealed a significant difference ($\chi^2(2) = 7.47$, $p = .02$).

Next, we collapsed the 3-category approach further to examine simply whether or not a guilty verdict was entered for at least one charge. Women's ethnic minority membership was associated with the likelihood of a guilty verdict being entered ($\chi^2(1) = 5.61$, $p = .02$, Cohen's $d = .31$). For women not identifying as ethnic minorities, the odds ratio that a guilty verdict was *not* entered (for any reason, such as a dismissal or failure to file or found not guilty) versus that a guilty verdict *was* entered was 1.68. However, this odds ratio was significantly reduced in women identifying with an ethnic minority group (*Risk estimate* = .83), indicating greater chance that a guilty verdict was entered in minority women's cases. The odds that a not guilty versus a guilty verdict was entered were increased for women living with their abuser at the time of the incident ($B = .57$, $W = 4.40$, $p = .04$).

Discussion

In collaboration with community- and system-based partners, the current study used an experimental design in a sample of women with police-reported IPD to test the impact of a victim-focused, community-coordinated outreach on criminal legal system outcomes compared with the existing system-based referral approach. Unlike most of the existing studies on victim-focused outreach that rely on shelter or emergency room/medical facilities, this study drew on a far wider sample: women victims of police-reported IPA. Furthermore, the sample was diverse with regard to a range of demographic variables, such as age and ethnicity. Moreover, this study included both random assignment and longitudinal data. Therefore, the effects we documented in this research are particularly striking in that they occurred in the context of a rigorous experimental design comparing relatively similar conditions. Importantly, the vast majority (86%) of women in the sample reported previous instances of psychologically aggressive tactics in the 6 months prior to

the target incident. In addition, more than half the women in the sample reported physical aggression (61%) or injuries (53%) caused by the abuser in the 6 months prior to the target incident. Thus, for most women in the sample, the target incident reflected a continuation of aggression and abuse in their intimate relationships.

This study was designed to compare the two experimentally manipulated conditions (O versus R). Importantly, all available evidence points to the successful randomization of women to the O and R groups; these groups did not differ from one another on key demographic or case characteristics. However, two additional groups emerged that had to be considered: women who system-based advocates were unable to reach after three attempts (Not Reached; NR); and women who declined further contact when reached by system-based advocates (Declined; D). Women in these naturally-occurring D and NR groups were equivalent to women in the O and R groups on all demographic and case variables examined, with one exception: women who declined contact were significantly more likely to live with their partner at the time of the first interview (T1) than women in the other three groups. Because women in the D and NR groups were equivalent on all but one variable tested at the outset, we were able to compare all four groups in our primary analyses. However, we must be careful to note that we do not consider the D and NR groups to be controls for the O and R groups because they were not randomly assigned; thus, interpretation of differences between O/R and D/NR groups should be interpreted cautiously, particularly around any consideration of causal relationships.

Outreach and Criminal Legal System Outcomes

This study examined several criminal legal system outcomes, including women's engagement with prosecution tasks; whether she went to court; and case disposition. Across all variables, we found evidence that victim-focused contact (O and R groups) was linked to better outcomes than lack of contact (D and NR groups). Women were significantly more likely to engage fully with prosecutors (versus no engagement) when they were in the O or R group compared with D or NR. In fact, those women in either the O or R groups were 6 times more likely to report full engagement (versus no engagement) than women who were not reached by system-based advocates. Interestingly, perceptions of physical (but not economic) dependence on the abuser were associated with decreases in likelihood of full cooperation. We asked about physical dependence at T3 because of spontaneous, anecdotal reports women made about concerns over physical dependence on the abuser at T1/T2. Thus, these findings point to the importance of using interview approaches that allow women's concerns to emerge over time so that systematic questions can be added to later interview time points.

SES did not moderate engagement effects; however, higher SES was associated with greater likelihood of engagement. At this point, it is unclear why lower SES is associated with a lower likelihood of full engagement. Potentially, SES may operate through or in conjunction with mechanisms such as dependence and physical aggression severity to have an impact on engagement. SES may also predict particular beliefs about the criminal legal system that affect the likelihood that women will engage with prosecutorial tasks. We were unable, however, to test this latter explanation in our current data set.

We also examined the likelihood that women were asked to go to court; and went to court if asked. Importantly, being in the O or R groups relative to D or NR groups were associated with a greater likelihood of being asked to go to court. In fact, 67% of women in either O or R groups were asked to go to court, relative to only 47% of women in the D or NR groups. This difference in the likelihood of being asked to go to court is particularly striking because the groups were equivalent at T1 on relevant demographic and case characteristics (except the likelihood of living with the abuser at the T1 interview, where the D group differed from the other three groups), suggesting that neither case nor demographic characteristics drove decisions about who was asked to go to court. Instead, the data suggest that early contact with system-based advocates is associated with a higher likelihood of receiving invitations to be involved in later criminal legal system proceedings. Whereas women who are invited to participate in criminal legal system proceedings have opportunities to make their own decisions about continued involvement in their cases, the decision is made by the system for women who are not invited to participate.

When we looked specifically at whether women went to court when asked, the data revealed a modest and encouraging trend for the effect of outreach. In particular, analyses suggest that women assigned to the O group were more likely to go to court than women in the R group, with an effect size of $d = .40$. Among ethnic minority women, those who were randomly assigned to the O group were significantly more likely to go to court than those assigned to the R group (78% versus 53%, respectively). This suggests that outreach may be particularly useful for ethnic minority women, in terms of decisions to go to court. Ethnic minority women, more so than majority women, may feel disenfranchised from the criminal legal system. Unsolicited outreach by a community-based advocate who communicates interest in the women's well-being may buffer against beliefs and/or past experiences of invalidation in the system. Thus, future research should evaluate whether outreach from community-based agencies helps ethnic minority women feel more connected and valued in the system.

To evaluate the impact of outreach on case disposition, we examined both continuous (number of guilty verdicts) and categorical (no charges filed versus dismissed) measures of case disposition. The groups did not differ in terms of number of guilty verdicts entered or severity of the case disposition. Nor did the groups differ on overall case disposition when viewed categorically. That is, the groups appeared equally likely to have their cases end with no charges filed/refused; dismissal; or a verdict entered. However, several factors did have an effect on outcome that should be noted. Women who identified as ethnic minorities and women with higher SES had greater likelihood of having a verdict entered (relative to having cases dismissed or not filed). This finding is consistent with the relationship observed between SES and likelihood that women went to court if asked. In addition, the data suggest that living with the abuser at the time of the incident increased the likelihood that cases were dismissed relative to having a verdict entered.

Because living with the abuser emerged in these analyses, we looked more closely at the effects of outreach for women who continued to live with the abuser at T1 (approximately one month from the incident). Among these women, a striking effect of outreach emerged: 100% of women randomly assigned to outreach had verdicts entered in their cases versus only 33% of women randomly assigned to the referral group. In fact, 56% of women in the

referral group had their cases dismissed and 11% had either no charges filed or charges refused. This finding, then, points to a subgroup of women for whom outreach may be particularly helpful: those who continue to cohabit with their abuser in the month after the reported incident.

Study Limitations and Strengths

Our first interview occurred within a median of 26 days from the incident. In spite of how quickly we were able to interview women, we lacked a true baseline prior to women having any contact with system- or community-based personnel. We had no feasible way of contacting and interviewing women prior to their contact with system-based advocates (e.g., DPD advocates sometimes go to the scene of incidents as well as begin calls to victims the morning after the incident). Thus, we do not know what effect the initial contact with system-based advocates had on women prior to our T1 assessment.

In spite of the study limitations, several strengths should be noted. In particular, one of the primary strengths of this study was the successful collaboration between research, system-based, and community-based partners. For approximately eight months, the system- and community-based partners adapted their procedures to randomly assign women to outreach or referral conditions to facilitate the most rigorous test of the outreach program. The first author met regularly with partners to facilitate this successful collaboration. Thus, the current study involved a successful randomized control design in the context of a practitioner-researcher partnership. Drawing on spatial data (Figure 1), we were able to demonstrate the apparent representativeness of the sample to the population of IPA reports in Denver, which is important to generalization of findings. In addition, we collected information on characteristics of the IPA incident and the women to examine moderators of outreach effectiveness. Thus, results from the current study can inform best practices for similar CCRs to maximize positive effects. Moreover, given the sample size and careful research design, we hope that the findings from the current study can provide other jurisdictions with an understanding of the moderators' nuanced effects. Few of the existing studies on community outreach programs are longitudinal in nature, thus the current study is somewhat unique. For these reasons, the current study allows for an unprecedented examination of a victim-focused, CCR program following police-reported IPA.

The current study provides evidence of positive effects of victim-focused services on criminal legal system outcomes. For example, we found positive effects for outreach and referral conditions on several criminal legal system outcomes as well as specific effects for outreach among marginalized women. Thus, the current findings are directly relevant to policy makers and practitioners seeking to develop and adapt victim-focused services following IPA. Furthermore, this project offers a template for the successful collaboration of research, system-based, and community-based partners to implement a randomized control design.

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Notes

1. For the purposes of this study, the term IPA describes abusive behaviors that are both violent and nonviolent (including stalking) posed by a current or former intimate partner (e.g., ex-spouse, spouse, lover, boyfriend, date; see Belknap & Potter, 2006). We do not discount the IPA that happens in same-sex relationships or can be perpetrated by women in different-sex relationships; however, it was beyond the scope of our study to include persons in same-sex relationships or men victims in different-sex relationships.
2. Given the history of the criminal legal system to respond unfairly to abused women, we prefer the term “criminal legal system” to “criminal justice system” to not assume a “just” outcome.
3. For a more complete description of the study design and collection procedures please refer to the NIJ Final Report or contact the first author.

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Bios

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